

Building Scene

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Architects challenged by \$65,000 idea house

By Doug Funko
Staff writer

Given the right circumstances — cheap, developed land and no stringent lot size requirements — new houses can arise with construction budgets of \$65,000 in the Detroit market.

That's what architects say. The houses probably won't be the 3,000-plus-square-foot estates erected for recent Homearamas, and they likely won't be found in tony northern and western suburbs.

But they can be built and stylishly, too.

Progressive Architecture, a magazine for professionals, recently announced a competition for architects and designers to do just that. The winning plan will be built on a 103-by-65 foot corner lot in Cleveland.

The challenge — to design a single-family house of at least 950 square feet not to exceed 35 feet in height with a construction budget of \$65,000, moderate income housing in Cleveland.

"A lot of architects are involved in high-end housing, expensive housing," said Thomas Fisher, executive editor of the magazine.

"A lot of architects have ideas to reduce the cost of affordable housing. It's not often they're given that opportunity or perceived to be interested in that field."

ARCHITECTS HERE detailed how they would approach the task.

"The answer has got to be in manufactured housing," said Francis Bartlett, a Rochester architect. "We just can't go run around in the muck and cold weather and nail 2-by-4s together. It's dumb."

Prefab housing, built to specification in a factory, then transported and assembled on a building site, is safer and more attractive than traditional stick construction, Bartlett said.

Robert Ziegelman, chairman of Luckenbach/Ziegelman and Partners of Birmingham, figures that elements of a prefab project designed for overseas markets could be adapted here.



"Now we're in the midst of . . . going back to prefab, modular housing for Israel and Czechoslovakia," Ziegelman said. "It's basically three-dimensional steel trusses 12 feet high, 36 feet long and 9 feet 4 inches high."

"YOU TAKE a multiplicity of that module. You can hang on any kind of

exterior, any floor system. All materials are top grade.

"You can go faster (with modular)," Ziegelman said. "Money costs money. The faster you go, the more you pick up on interest and carrying charges."

Ease of expandability is another good feature of modular housing.

Ziegelman said. "You can start with three boxes and add more."

But what of interior elements? "I would really start out with some very open floor plans, one or two major open spaces public in character where you can bring in guests," said Robert Clarke, president of CBI Design Professionals of

Birmingham. "That would include a kitchen/eating area and possibly including an entertainment area."

"I'd do some loft-type things. The house probably will be two-story, one or two bedrooms. A loft can serve as . . . a guest area, entertaining area, a play area if you have children."

"ONE OF THE problems in that level of housing is a lack of storage space," Clarke said. "I would look at a basement dedicated to utilities and storage. It's good, cheap space."

Bartlett believes that ego has surpassed need when it comes to housing for many buyers in this country.

"In America, bigness is ego. The bigger the house on the block, the bigger the ego. I think there's a lot of duplication today. House design can be used and should be used to get costs down. People buying for \$65,000 want something very comfortable, very cozy, low maintenance."

"You need a conversation area to talk. It can easily be the same place you sit down to dinner," Bartlett said. "Obviously, you need a bedroom for parents and children. The real question is do you need a (separate) bath for parents and children? It could be combined with the right design."

"I DON'T THINK you need an enclosed garage. That's a tremendous cost," Bartlett continued. "Perhaps just a covered area."

Ziegelman talked about movable pods within a large shell.

"What you can do is give one great space and pods, like a kitchen pod, and allow the owner to break up space any way he wants," Ziegelman said. "It doesn't have to be permanent walls. The kitchen and bathroom are the only ones that have to be private spaces."

Fisher, an architect in addition to his duties at the magazine, expects that a couple of hundred architects will submit entries to the contest.

"I think we're going to see various kinds of prefabrication, stress skin construction, things that go beyond 2-by-4 stud construction," he said.

"Another big area is the way houses are planned internally. The emphasis is on flexibility. The standard dining room, living room, kitchen, three bedroom, bath is a considerable luxury in the way space is used. 'Architects are creative people,' he said. 'They always surprise you.'"

Maps as decorating items are just out of this world

Maps that aren't for getting anywhere are becoming hot items for the home. Decorators and home owners, rather than the usual collectors, are buying them up.

It's not that these newcomers to the wonderful world of maps have suddenly started poring over navigational charts or town plans, they're just interested in the maps' aesthetic value.

"Maps have great wall appeal and come at the right price," Sandra Brusewitz, director of design for Environmental Graphics, said. "But it's only recently that Americans have discovered this. Probably it's a trend triggered by the English look. One Americans felt in love with the way English country homes look, it was inevitable that they would discover maps as a decorative tool."

But the irony is that an interest in maps would occur at a time when people seem to know less about geography.

"We read about all those studies that bemoan the knowledge of geography among students," she said.

"Yet people travel more and they see maps all the time on television news. But I guess a TV map of the Philippines or Israel with stars indicating Manila and Jerusalem flip by, and people don't grasp where those countries really are. And in school, kids don't learn about maps any more."

One of the favorite rooms in the house for maps is the family room.

"In family rooms, frequent travelers often adorn it with pins to show off ports of call," Brusewitz said. "And since this is an inexpensive decoration, it's even OK for family members to use Magic Markers to highlight countries, cities or memories. After all, one reason that people are drawn to maps is that they relate to personal experiences."

"People like to look up places where they spent their vacation, hun-

cynnoomed or where their ancestors came from."

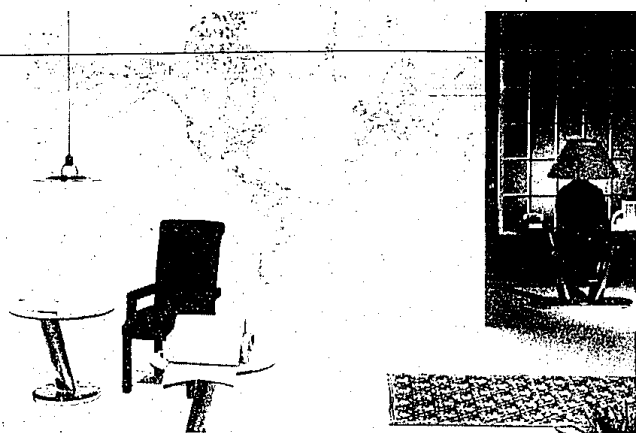
BRUSEWITZ ADMITS there's a tendency to think that maps have a masculine bent and work best in dens, offices and libraries, but she believes that thinking is outdated.

"Sure, that's the way they do it in English manor houses. But this is the here and now. Women travel just as much as men and are as interested in world affairs as they are. They're no longer sheltered from the world. The topic is so interesting that it would look great in any contemporary and informal setting, even a dining or living room."

She also likes the idea of using maps in hallways.

"It's hard to find something interesting to do with hallways," she said. "Besides in hallways one can get close-up and study it real good."

And she sees them complementing home offices.



Wall maps have evolved from an instructional item for the classroom to a decorating item for the home.

Members' income shouldn't sway board

I am a newly elected board member in a condominium project where the units range from \$79,000 to \$105,000. I am truly amazed at how cheap the other members of the board are to spend any money on anything significant. All they seem to do is talk about the fact that they need to save money because some of the members of the association are on a fixed income and that therefore they must reduce the level of maintenance to accommodate these people's economic needs. How do I convince them that they are wrong and are running a potential risk in regard to their responsibilities?

You have encountered a situation where your board is not aware of its fiduciary/legal liabilities and of the distinct possibility that the board can be sued by a co-owner or other person for breach of these duties. It would appear that only through education, short of the "school of hard knocks," will your board understand its legal responsibilities and of the necessity to run the condominium association properly. Perhaps you should consider attending a seminar or obtaining some information on

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the subject of condominium opera-

I am a member of the board of directors and want to get rid of another co-owner/director whom I and the other members of the board suspect has been pocketing funds. One of the directors says we should just throw her off the board, but I am not sure the bylaws allow for it. How can we handle this matter?

More than likely, your condominium bylaws provide that a director of the association cannot be removed unless 50 percent of all the co-owners at a special meeting agrees to do so. This requirement must be confirmed, but assuming that is the case, you will have to convene such a special meeting and request that the co-owner/director be removed. Obviously, this is a very difficult

task to undertake, resulting in great internal decisiveness and embarrassment to all parties if, in fact, you have documented evidence that the co-owner/director has absconded with funds, you should approach that director and advise her of your knowledge and request that they resign from the board immediately. Otherwise, consult with your attorney as to what course of action the association should take against the director. Basically, the association should initially be concerned with recouping any funds that were improperly taken, and it may be necessary to immediately notify the association's insurance company regarding any alleged pilferage. You may also have to consult with local police authorities, depending on your discussions with legal counsel and the board member in question.

I am a developer who is planning on doing an airport hangar condominium. Have you had any experience in this area?

Airport hangar condominiums can be a viable form of development if the developer is careful about defining the particular areas that are

being sold off and allowing for adequate expansion or contraction, if necessary, of the condominium space. As in the case of parking facilities, recreational condominiums and boat slip condominiums, airport hangar condominium projects can be a viable way of insuring one's ownership interest, particularly from a commercial standpoint.

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